

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

This invention is related to automation of business or manufacturing processes control and tracking using workflow technology where the process is represented in the form of a route, a step-by-step description of the process. The route is used to control and track a document or manufactured item through a process. In particular, the present invention is related to the representation of the route and the tracking of the document or manufactured item in multiple systems that use the information.

In the present invention, a business or manufacturing process is divided into discrete process steps and the sequence of steps is described as a route. A workflow system uses the route to control the document or manufactured item so that the process steps operate on the document or manufactured item in the sequence described in the route. The workflow system can track the state of the document or manufactured item as it progresses through the steps of the route. The workflow system requires a detailed route since it controls the sequence of steps. However, a second workflow system may need an abstracted or object level view of the route. The abstracted view may be used, for example, to track the document or manufactured item for planning purposes. In addition, the abstracted view may be used to create new routes or modify existing routes and the detailed route generated from the abstracted view. The abstraction, or object, is provided by encapsulation of workflow functions into objects where the high level abstracted view of the route is a sequence of objects and the detailed view is the step-by-step workflow operations of the expanded objects.